



New Haven Public Schools Mathematics Department

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON VARIOUS BILLS (6666, 6654, 939)

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Senator Gaffey, Rep. Fleischmann, members of the Education Committee, my name is Kenneth Mathews, K-12 Supervisor of Mathematics for New Haven Public Schools, here today on the teacher certification bills. As Supervisor of Mathematics, I am charged with the recruitment and retention of mathematics teachers to fill 142 math teaching positions in our middle and high schools. I, of course, need to fill these positions with highly qualified, intelligent, dedicated, and hard-working teachers who will feel reasonably challenged, supported and respected in our schools. This is a daunting task in light of the severe shortage of highly qualified mathematics teachers in Connecticut.

I applaud the Education Committee and the State Department of Education for addressing teacher certification issues. Teacher quality is critical to a successful educational experience and in closing the achievement gap, and we support efforts to help us attract and retain qualified teachers. A key focus of our District Improvement Plan is improving teacher quality.

To that end, there are many components in Senate Bill No. 939, AAC Educator Certification, House Bill No. 6654, AA Establishing a Resident Teacher Certificate, and House Bill No. 6666, AAC Teacher Certification, that we support.

Bill 6666 seeks to allow teachers to test out of subject area requirements in a shortage area. The bill also exempts certified out-of-state teachers from having to take and pass the competency examination and subject area assessment in order to teach in Connecticut. These are wonderfully strong components of the bill. I have dealt with prospective teachers who have majored in engineering, finance, and physics who hoped to become math teachers but were bogged down with the course requirements in mathematics even though they were already masters in the content. Furthermore it is demoralizing for a veteran teacher from another state, who has moved to Connecticut, to be forced to embark upon initial teacher requirements. I applaud your intention to ameliorate this problem.

The Bill 939 details certification and professional development requirements. The Bill calls for 30 credits and/or a major in the content area in order to teach. In my 14 years of mathematics education leadership, I have found that teachers who major in quantitative majors other than mathematics bring an ability to relate and present the mathematics more relevantly. This

important capability should not be overlooked, especially during a time of extreme shortage.

Lastly, Bill 6654 calls for a Resident Teacher Certificate for teachers in an "alternate route to certification" program. This certificate seems to have great potential in easing the burden that supervisors of shortage areas face. The bill also calls for issuance of a durational shortage area permit (a) for those in a planned program **and** (b) they must also "have twelve semester hours of credit **or** have passed the assessment approved by the State Board of Education in the subject area they will teach." I believe that this lowers the standard for the DSAP certificate. In recent years, it was mandated that one DSAP requirement was the passing of the approved exam (Praxis 2). Now it seems that 12 credits of mathematics could serve in lieu of passing the Praxis 2. Using the Praxis 2 ensures that a minimum standard of mathematics proficiency is achieved. I believe that 12 credits in mathematics would compromise this minimum standard. For instance, a prospective teacher could have passed College Algebra, Math for Elementary Education, PreCalculus, and Finite Mathematics. This same teacher could receive a DSAP in mathematics and thus be licensed to teach Geometry, Trigonometry, Calculus and Statistics. The exam heavily measures these areas of mathematics. Twelve semester hours of mathematics could not possibly do the same. For these reasons, I strongly believe that the resident teacher **must** have at least 12 credit hours in the field **and** have passed Praxis 2. Please give this heavy consideration.